

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

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It will be remembered that a few years ago it was decided that the Treasurer of the Society should only read a report at the annual meeting, in October.

Six months ago, October 20, 1903, the Council passed the following vote; namely, "that the Librarian be permitted to make his report annually unless he has occasion to send in a special communication."

This vote was passed at the suggestion of the Librarian, who remarked that it seemed to him well to save the time occupied in reading the report and the space taken up in printing, because of "the increasing number of scholarly papers offered at our meetings," especially as in the case of most of the Societies with which we correspond "the library report is a yearly statement."

At a meeting of the Council held April 1, 1904, Henry Vignaud, Esquire, of Paris, was chosen a delegate of this Society to the centenary of the Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France, to be held at Paris on the 11th instant.

At the same meeting of the Council a copy of a bill for the Preservation of Historic and Prehistoric Objects, then before the Committee on Public Lands of the United States House of Representatives, was laid before it, and Dr. Engler was instructed to prepare a letter embodying suggestions of its members, to be sent to the Committee having the bill under consideration. The letter was afterwards forwarded.

It is gratifying to learn that the great work of our countryman and associate, the late Benjamin Franklin Stevens

of London, is almost if not wholly finished. I refer of course to the index of all the official documents that exist on the other side of the Atlantic regarding the American Revolution and the establishment of peace at its close. According to reports in London the latter portion of March, the last ten volumes of the work were in the hands of the binder. It is said to have taken Mr. Stevens and twenty or more assistants, thirty years to make the collection. At the end of that time they had catalogued all the documents relating to the period of our history to be covered, in possession of the British government, in private collections in Great Britain and in the archives of the governments of France, Spain and Holland. The number of documents catalogued is greater than 161,000. The index describes the character and location of every document, and consists of 180 folio volumes, containing about 500 pages each. It is stated that Mr. Stevens estimated the cost to him of the preparation of this great work as about \$100,000. When he died two years ago the material had been collected and for the most part bound. Mrs. Stevens and the partner in business of the late Mr. Stevens completed the index.

According to a letter which appeared in the *Boston Herald* of April 3, from which the particulars here given are taken, fifty of the volumes of the index contain a list of the documents catalogued in the order in which they appear in the archives and collections from which they have been taken; one hundred volumes give the documents in chronological order, with descriptions of all of them; and thirty volumes contain the documents in alphabetical order and entries, in nearly every case, under both the sender and receiver of a paper.

Among the papers referred to in the index are all the despatches and letters of the governors of the thirteen colonies before the outbreak of the Revolution and those of the British commanders during the war: General Gage, Sir

William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, General Burgoyne and Lord Cornwallis.

It is certainly to be hoped that this great work may be bought by the United States government and placed in the Congressional Library, or by some citizen of this country who will deposit it in the library of a public institution, where it may be readily consulted by students of our history.

In this connection it seems proper to extend our thanks again to our President, Senator Hoar and Hon. Edward L. Davis for the present of Stevens's Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives relating to America, 1773-83. 2107 documents are reproduced in this work, which in its completed form consists of 24 thick boxes, with an additional box for the index.

The Society has met with heavy losses by death since the last meeting. Four foreign members, all men of unusual distinction, have died, as have three resident members, who held important places in the community, two of them having endeared themselves to the members of this Society during long and pleasant companionship. These two were members of the Council, Hon. Henry Stedman Nourse and Professor Egbert Coffin Smyth. Mr. Nourse read the paper which was presented by a member of the Council, at our last meeting, and died a few days later, November 14, 1903.

Professor Smyth, our learned associate and genial, well beloved friend, passed away on the 12th of the present month.

Meetings of the Council have been held to commemorate the lives of these members. The record of one of these meetings has already been sent in print to members of the Society. The other has just been held. Mr. E. Harlow Russell will read today a notice of his old friend Mr. Nourse, and a sketch of Dr. Smyth will be prepared later for the Proceedings of the Society.

The other resident member who has died during the last six months is Hon. Andrew Haswell Green, of New York City, who was shot as he was entering his house, November 30, 1903, and died immediately. A sketch of his ancestry, life and work has been prepared by his cousin Samuel S. Green.

The foreign members who have died are: William Edward Hartpole Lecky, D.C.L., London, who died Oct. 23, 1903; Professor Christian Matthias Theodor Mommsen, Ph.D., Berlin, who died Nov. 1, 1903; Professor Hermann Eduard Von Holst, Ph.D., Freiburg, professor in Chicago University, who died Jan. 20, 1904; and Sir Leslie Stephen, Litt.D., London, who died Feb. 22, 1904.

Notices of these gentlemen will be prepared and printed at a future date.

In the last will and testament of Andrew H. Green appear the following words, in Article I: "I give and bequeath . . . E. To the American Antiquarian Society, of Worcester, Massachusetts, Five thousand dollars."

The death of Mr. Nourse left the office of Biographer vacant. Judge Samuel Utley of Worcester has been chosen to fill that position, and I am happy to say has accepted the place.

**Henry Stedman Nourse.** The echoes of his firm, incisive voice had scarcely died away in the hall where our Society held its meeting last autumn—the interval was but of days, almost of hours—when we were shocked to hear that our associate, Honorable HENRY STEDMAN NOURSE, A.M., whom we had all learned to respect for sterling qualities of mind and heart, had fallen, as it were in a moment, from a condition of ordinary though not perfect health, and was no more. The paper which he had just read to the Society was marked by that thoroughness of research and accuracy of statement which characterized all his writings; and he had stood up before us sturdily on his feet and read it to the end without a halt or a quaver of failing strength to foreshadow the eternal silence so

soon to fall upon him. Happy indeed, for him, with such eager and tireless activity of brain and hand, who would so have chafed under the arrest of slow wasting disease, that the inevitable blow was quick and final. The composed expression of his face in death was impressive and reassuring to all who saw it; it suggested the shock of corn that cometh in in his season. But notwithstanding the great consolation of so fit an end to such an honorable career, we of this Society—and not we alone—cannot accept our loss without profound regret, especially when we look around and ask, Who shall fill his place? For our friend possessed a combination of endowments and equipment and disposition that fitted him for an uncommonly wide range of serviceableness to his fellow-men.

The chronological framework of Mr. Nourse's life has already been made more or less familiar to us all through the various obituary notices and memorials that followed his death. And it will be convenient for us to follow the order of time in the brief review of his career now to be offered as part of the customary proceedings of this Society.

It should be said here, and said with grateful appreciation, that the task of the present writer has been made comparatively easy and wholly pleasant by prompt and full responses to all his many inquiries, on the part of a pretty large number of Mr. Nourse's former associates and friends, whose testimony, though frank and discriminating, has been without a single discordant note.

The life of our late associate covered a period of seventy-two years—almost three-quarters of a century—from 1831 to 1903, and thus fell in a time now generally regarded as being of profound if not paramount significance in the intellectual and political history of our country. With several intervals of absence, his home was always in his native town of Lancaster, Massachusetts, in the house where he was born and where he died. It is a country town of rare natural beauty of the quiet kind that is apt to follow the windings of a slow-moving stream; a town with a perspective of unusually picturesque history, and a population never lacking men and women distinguished for intelligence, refinement and public spirit. His parents, Stedman and Patty (Howard) Nourse, were not natives of Lancaster, but took up their abode there at the begin-

ning of their married life, building their own house, occupying it as long as they lived, and leaving it for the continued occupancy of their two children. Stedman Nourse was a carpenter by trade, and he seems to have imparted to his only son, by blood or training, excellent skill in the use of tools. Both parents were of good New England stock, with conspicuous virtues of industry, frugality, thrift and self-reliance. They were a home-loving pair, who neither sought nor shunned society, but kept the noiseless tenor of their way, free from any breath of reproach and respected by all their neighbors.

The boy Henry is remembered in the family as "having his face in a book," and no less as "always making something." He also showed more than ordinary interest in outdoor nature; was fond of taking long rambles in pastures and woods, and often brought home some curious trophy from these boyish excursions for further study or observation. A happy balance between the active and receptive parts of his disposition seems thus to have been fixed at an early age. Though shy and sensitive, he soon attracted notice for his intelligence and aptitude for study. So general was the praise of his brightness and docility that came from his teachers that the father, though of restricted means, was easily convinced that a son so promising should be sent to college, and gladly bent all his energies to that end. Henry was for a time a student at Leicester Academy, then a fitting school of high repute, but was mainly prepared for college in his native town, and entered Harvard in 1849, at the age of eighteen. That was the year of the first rush to California in search of gold; how fortunate, for him and for us, that the youth cast in his lot with the select little band who preferred to seek their fortunes along the classic sands of Pactolus rather than on the banks of the Sacramento. The class of 1853 contained a pretty large sprinkling of men who rose to distinction in after life. President Eliot, Professors Cutler, Hill, Peck, Peirce and Waterhouse, John D. Washburn, Justin Winsor and several others, have won a more than national reputation. Nourse's college rank was well above the middle of this class, though not so high as to be in the "first ten." He was highly respected by his classmates, who speak of "friendly rather than intimate" relations with him, but

there is strong testimony to the growing warmth of their attachment and esteem as later years ripened and mellowed his social qualities and more fully revealed his worth. He was a faithful and diligent rather than brilliant student; always self-respecting and courteous; but he did not, then or thereafter, dull his palm with entertainment of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. This was due in part to an innate modesty that from childhood to age made him shrink from everything consequential or forthputting, and possibly also in some degree to an uneasy feeling that he might be less regarded by some because he would make no claim, and recognize none, to what is called "social position," but would be judged, and would judge others, by personal character and desert alone. He certainly appreciated, perhaps even exaggerated, the advantages of his college course. I do not believe he ever thought with Emerson that its chief value is "to teach the young man its little avail." He seemed almost to feel that it alone had made him what he was, and he could hardly see how anything deserving the name of scholarship or culture could be attained without it. This view made him a most loyal son of Harvard, and his filial affection found natural expression in making his *alma mater* the residuary legatee of his estate.

After graduation, feeling the need of immediate self-support, he began to teach, passing two years as instructor in Latin and Greek at Phillips Exeter Academy and two years more as principal of Bristol Academy at Taunton. He had previously, while in college, partly paid his way by teaching several terms of "district school." There is evidence that he did not regard teaching, especially of the classics, as being much to his taste, nor were his gifts probably such as ensure the highest success in that vocation. He was faithful and accurate and just, as in every other relation, but he did not possess, in addition to these essential qualities, the genial and expectant spirit—what is sometimes called the personal magnetism—that attracts and inspires the young.

It is of interest to know that at about this time Mr. Nourse was strongly attracted towards the domain of natural history, then broadening and acquiring new importance in this country through the luminous and eloquent

teaching of Louis Agassiz, and that he had serious thoughts of devoting himself to that pursuit. He was unquestionably well equipped for the study of science; but perhaps he felt the uncertainty of gaining a livelihood as a naturalist, and so turned to the more distinctly recognized profession of a civil engineer, entering in 1858 an office in Boston and applying himself with diligence to the necessary study and practice. Two years later we find him engaged as assistant engineer of construction on a railroad in Maryland, but in the fateful year 1861 the impending civil war put an end to that undertaking and turned the current of his life in a wholly new direction.

I suppose it would not be easy to name a regiment that saw a more varied and characteristic war service in the four tragic years from 1861 to 1865 than did the Fifty-fifth Illinois Infantry. In the strength of his young manhood, being then just thirty years old, Nourse joined this body of brave and patriotic men, at first as headquarters clerk, without rank or pay, and followed its fortunes until mustered out on March 29, 1865, long after his term of enlistment had expired. I am convinced that he took the field as a soldier, not from ambition for military glory, for that trait found small place in his nature, but from a deep sense of his duty as a citizen of the republic. Though advanced first to the rank of lieutenant and adjutant of his regiment, and afterwards to that of captain, and appointed commissary of musters of the 17th Army Corps, I find no evidence that he ever sought promotion, but abundant testimony from those who stood by his side that he bore himself at all times with unfaltering courage and uncomplaining fortitude. An officer of rank writes me: "I recall him vividly, because I saw him in our first battle (Shiloh) with a musket and outfit, and heard him begging the Colonel for a chance to take a shot at a rebel color-bearer before the Colonel had given the order to open fire. . . . You can safely say that this live Yankee, fresh from Harvard, entered as a stranger a wild western regiment, did a large amount of work, marched thousands of miles, fought in many battles, and did his duty faithfully and quietly, and, so far as I know, was never lacking in courtesy, either officially or personally." Much of Nourse's service was rendered unusually trying by the fact that two or



three of his superiors of the field and staff proved to be unfit for command, and the history of the regiment is in large part a story of the galling tyranny of these men borne with varying degrees of impatience by subordinates who could find no honorable means of relief. About twenty years later Mr. Nourse, in collaboration with three able men who had been his comrades, compiled and published a most thorough and painstaking "Story of the Fifty-fifth," into which he put some of the best of his historical writing. It was not our friend's habit to talk much of his army experience, perhaps because large portions of it had been so painful that he did not like to live it over again.

In 1866 our soldier, now turned civilian again, was called to a very responsible post as resident engineer in charge of the erection of the Pennsylvania Steel Works, at Baldwin (now Steelton), near Harrisburg, and was soon after made general superintendent of the company. Here he displayed the same qualities of quiet efficiency and devotion to duty that had distinguished him in the army. An intelligent and discriminating associate in the establishment at this time says of him in a recent letter, "all admired him for his integrity and manliness." He remained in this position seven years, when premonitions of failing health warned him to take a rest, and he urged his resignation upon the company.

In 1870, while in service at Baldwin, Mr. Nourse had married Mrs. Mary Baldwin (Whitney) Thurston, widow of Captain George Lee Thurston, a neighbor and friend and army comrade of Nourse's, a patriot soldier who had given his young life to his country early in the war. It was a happy union, as of the oak and the vine. They were unlike in temperament and had enjoyed a quite different early training. But each supplemented the other in salutary ways, for each possessed desirable qualities not so fully developed in the other, qualities which under the benign influence of mutual respect and affection became harmoniously blended as the years went by.

For a long vacation, Mr. and Mrs. Nourse now spent a delightful and memorable year in Europe. Upon their return they took up their permanent residence in Lancaster, and during the next twenty-five years Mr. Nourse engaged in various occupations and services, public and private,

mostly looking to the welfare of his town and state rather than to personal advantage or reward. He accepted many positions upon committees, commissions, boards of control and the like, where his wide knowledge, executive ability and excellent common sense gave him the reputation he most coveted, that of an honorable and useful citizen. He had a decided taste for historical studies and soon began to rescue from error and oblivion the annals of his native town. Four ample and goodly volumes, compiled with scrupulous care from widely scattered and often obscure sources and annotated with judgment and reserve, attest his tireless industry and clear historic sense.

His power of correct inference from few data was quick and strong. He had a rare apprehension of the possible significance of an isolated fact. He could pick up scattered bits of local history, thrown away by the unthinking, or hidden in musty records and documents, or lurking in forgotten letters, inventories, and casual memoranda, and could recombine these into a consistent mosaic that would picture a long past event, often restoring its true setting of causes and consequences. While this modest annotator and chronicler would by no means have laid claim to the imagination and philosophic insight requisite for an historian in the large sense, there are not a few passages in his writings that show a conception of the past, revived, clothed with appropriate circumstances and made to appear as the once-present. His vision was true and consistent as far as it went, and he never strained it beyond its powers.

The services performed by Mr. Nourse as a public-spirited citizen, for the benefit of his town and his state, can hardly be estimated at their full value except by his fellow-workers in the various positions of responsibility which he occupied, for he sounded no trumpet before him. In both branches of the state legislature, on the library commission, as trustee of the Worcester Insane Hospital, as member of the state board of charity, on the school committee and the library board of Lancaster—in all these relations, and many more, his courtesy, candor and good sense, his disinterestedness, his unshrinking readiness to do his full share of whatever was to be done, are gratefully remembered and spoken of by all who were associated with him. It is mentioned by the attendants that even the poor demented

patients in the hospital brightened up and smiled at his coming.

His taste was for working societies rather than social clubs, particularly for such as encourage historical research; and he accepted membership in several such organizations. He was elected a member of our body in 1883, and a member of its council in 1901. We of this Society need no reminder of the value of his work or the worth of his character as an associate, and there is no doubt that he in turn enjoyed and prized the intellectual and social privileges of membership with us.

The several impressions made by our friend upon those well acquainted with him at various periods combine to form something like a "composite photograph" of the man, in which certain features are very distinctly marked. For although, as we have seen, he engaged with zeal in a considerable number of quite different activities, his nature, on the whole, was simple, homogeneous and consistent. There seemed few, if any, warring elements in his make-up, and I fancy the case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde would have been unintelligible to him. What he was, he was by a decided majority. An associate speaks—I think without exaggeration—of his "intense zeal for righteousness, in the conduct of affairs." In his case, "the child was father of the man." None of his youth was wasted in waywardness, and he was a stranger to dissipation, almost to recreation. Every day was made to count in whatever business he had in hand. He spent little time in hesitation over what to do, and little, I think, in regrets over what he had done. This was not only economy, it was sanity. Though surrounded by books, he was not given to desultory reading, but confined himself mainly to what would contribute to the subject he was studying. No man was ever more scrupulous in verifying his facts; he would go through with microscopic eye a whole edition of any of his published books, pen in hand, correcting minute errors of the press that had escaped the proof-reader. He was one of the most industrious and diligent of men. You never found him idle, and seldom vacillating as to the course he had better take. This singleness of purpose was part and parcel of his integrity and probity, and it operated to exclude from his character all insincerity, pre-

tense and affectation. Perhaps it also excluded a degree of geniality and *bonhomie* from his social intercourse, and imparted at times something of austerity and even acerbity to his manner. Such a person must always be out of his element in any company where compliments and the graceful sinuosities of deportment that we call "social tact" are more esteemed than frank truth and sincerity. Our plain-dealing friend certainly did not possess, nor did he covet, "those soft parts of conversation that chamberers have." That he sometimes, in fact, went towards the other extreme he probably would not have denied. If he knew a thing was true he did not greatly concern himself as to whether it would be agreeable. The thing he said would never be unfair or unkind as it lay in his own mind, or as it left his lips; but he lacked something of the sympathetic imagination that should follow or rather anticipate, the word or tone and realize how it will strike the other party.

Mr. Nourse was a typical and ideal American citizen with the New England mint-mark upon him. The blood of pilgrim and puritan mingled in his veins, and self-respect, raised to its highest power, gave direction and force to all he did. One felt the appropriateness of his preference for country life, and realized that if the last half-century had produced more men of his stamp we should have witnessed no headlong rush of our population to the cities.

Without the possession of genius; without commanding talents even; with but one signal good fortune in youth, namely, his college course; and but one in later life, his happy home,—our friend was widely respected and loved, and his memory will long be cherished, for a manly character, formed not mainly by gifts of nature, "where every god did seem to set his seal," but rather by pure aims and constant endeavor, ripened and enriched by the elevating influences that flow from the rendering of unselfish public service and from the mutual offices of noble friendships.

E. H. R.

For the Council,

SAMUEL SWETT GREEN.

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